

AMERICAN CONSULATE,

Colombo, Ceylon, June 17, 1935.

CONFIDENTIAL.

SUBJECT: ATTEMPT TO RECRUIT CEYLONESE LABORERS FOR SERVICE IN ITALIAN SOMALILAND.

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
JUL 17 1935

HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

WASHINGTON.

SIR:

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

I have the honor to report that, acting upon instructions from his Government, the Acting Italian Consul in Colombo has recently endeavored to recruit a few hundred laborers on a six months' contract for road construction work along the coast of Italian Somaliland. A statement to this effect has appeared in the press.

According to his own oral statement to members of the Consular Corps in Colombo, similar attempts to recruit laborers for Somaliland are being made in British India, Burma, the Straits Settlements, Netherland India and possibly in Siam or French Indo-China, inasmuch as Italian soldiers are unable to do heavy manual labor in the intense tropical heat of Italian Somaliland and Eritrea.

In response to a formal application which he has made to the Government of Ceylon for permission to re-

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recruit labor, the Acting Italian Consul's attention has been directed to the provisions of Ordinance No. 4 of 1882 under the terms of which the exportation of laborers from Ceylon under contract of service is lawful only when the Government of the place to which the laborers are to be sent has made provisions deemed sufficient by the Governor in Executive Council, for the protection of the local laborers emigrating to such a place.

The Acting Italian Consul has informed me that in the absence of any official information from the Government of Italian Somaliland, as to the manner in which Ceylonese laborers would be protected and cared for, he is not at present recruiting any laborers. However, he expects to receive the necessary assurance in due course and has not abandoned his intention of recruiting laborers if official permission can be obtained. He further stated that in their contracts, laborers would be guaranteed free medical attention and repatriation at any time upon application one month in advance.

The attempt to recruit laborers from Ceylon for six months service in Italian Somaliland is of interest for it clearly discloses that it is the serious intention of the Italian Government to develop "defensive" military highways over a considerable period of time in her Colonies bordering upon Abyssinia. It is likewise an admission of the inability of the Italian

soldiers

soldiers to carry out such construction works without the assistance of coolie labor.

Respectfully yours,

Robert L. Buell

Robert L. Buell,
American Consul.

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